



**MANCHESTER
ANIMATION
FESTIVAL**

Embargoed until 06:00 Tuesday 23 September

Manchester Animation Festival unveils 2025 programme packed with premieres, previews and industry icons

- **Manchester Animation Festival (MAF), the UK's largest celebration of animation and the nation's only Oscar® and BAFTA-qualifying animation festival, returns to HOME and venues across Manchester from 9–13 November**
- **This year's edition spotlights global talent, exclusive previews, and launches a dynamic new partnership with the University of Salford**

Images

[Images](#) (credit: Steph Ramplin)

Manchester, UK - [Manchester Animation Festival](#) (MAF), the UK's only Oscar® and BAFTA®-qualifying animation festival, is proud to announce its 2025 programme - an ambitious, diverse, and elite celebration of animation in all its forms. Taking place from 9-13 November at HOME and other venues across Manchester, this year's festival promises exclusive previews, behind-the-scenes insights, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion, all anchored by its dynamic new partnership with the University of Salford.

This year's line-up features a host of special events that spotlight the creative forces shaping animation today. MAF will honour the celebrated Irish studio Cartoon Saloon - known for *Wolfwalkers* and *The Breadwinner* - with its prestigious Fellowship award. A retrospective marking 50 years of Industrial Light & Magic will celebrate how the legendary studio has revolutionised cinematic animation. Walt Disney Animation Studio's Head of Animation, Chad Sellers and 2D Animation Lead, Renato dos Anjos, will offer an exclusive look into *The Making of Zootropolis 2*, while director Alex Woo lifts the curtain on his Netflix animated feature *In Your Dreams*. Audiences will also be treated to a behind-the-scenes journey of *The Scarecrows' Wedding*, adapted from Julia Donaldson's beloved book by Magic Light Pictures, and a magical new project from BBC Studios Kids and Family titled *Rafi the Wishing Wizard* will be unveiled.

MAF 2025's international feature film competition is bold and eclectic; Japanese director Baku Kinoshita will attend a Q&A following an exclusive preview of *The Last Blossom*, a visually stunning 2D animation. MAF will also host the UK premiere of *Arco*, a sci-fi fantasy distinguished by its unique visual style, directed and written by Ugo Bienvenu and produced by Félix de Givry and Natalie Portman. Joining the programme is *I Am Frankelda*, a haunting stop-motion feature that is the first of its kind produced in Mexico. Directed by Arturo and Roy Ambriz, the feature is making its UK debut following acclaim for its gothic storytelling and

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Registered office: Fletchers Mill, Dean Clough Mills, Halifax, England, HX3 5AX

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handcrafted aesthetic. Completing the competition slate are two stand-out films: *The Square*, a politically charged romance thriller directed by Kim Bo-sol, and *Little Amelie or the Character of Rain*, an Annecy Cristal winner directed by Maïlys Vallade and Liane-Cho Han.

Other features previewing at the festival include critically acclaimed titles *Lesbian Space Princess* directed by Emma Hough Hobbs and Leela Varghese, and a stunning 4K remaster of 1985's underground classic *Angel's Egg*, directed by Mamoru Oshii (*Ghost in the Shell*). The boundary-pushing, cult favourite studio Adult Swim also returns with *New, Newer, Newest* - a late-night showcase of exclusive content from their upcoming slate.

Festival Director Steve Henderson said: “As we stride into a new decade of MAF, we’re thrilled to bring another packed programme of premieres, exclusives, special guests and more back to Manchester this November. The passion of the animation community is what makes MAF so special, and their energy is what inspires us to aim higher every year. The whole team at MAF are really looking forward to celebrating with them when the festival returns from 9-13 November.”

MAF 2025 invites audiences to explore the craft and innovation of animation through standout panels including *Constantly Curious*, a panel in partnership with University of Salford that explores how curiosity can be a superpower in ideation, design, and execution. Other highlights include *The Art of the Ad*, which examines animation’s role in advertising, and Epic Games’ *Animating in Unreal*, offering insight into the future of real-time workflows and cutting-edge techniques. Each morning kicks off with intimate Q&A sessions featuring short filmmakers from around the world, celebrating bold storytelling and fresh perspectives in short-form animation.

The festival continues its commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion with a robust programme. *BlackFrame Presents* offers a powerful short film showcase, panel discussion, and networking event that amplifies Black voices in animation. WIA UK leads *Where We Go From Here*, a timely conversation on gender equity in the industry, while *Neurodiversity in Animation: Unlocking Creative Potential* - hosted by Aardman and Flycheese Animation - explores inclusive environments and the contributions of neurodivergent creatives.

The festival’s annual awards ceremony, presented by comedian and writer Alasdair Beckett-King, will take place on 13 November; celebrating outstanding achievements across British Film, Feature Film, Short Film, Student Film, Commissioned Film, Immersive Work, Children’s Shorts, and the Audience Award. Winners will receive the coveted Manchester Animation Festival trophy, handcrafted by renowned North-West based model makers Mackinnon & Saunders. The ceremony also includes the Industry Excellence Awards, honouring professionals in writing, storyboarding, character design, and character animation.

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Beyond screenings and awards, MAF 2025 offers key industry engagement opportunities, including the return of the Animation Nation Forum with sector-focused panels and discussions, and the Bridgewater Hall marketplace - free to attend and designed to facilitate networking between studios, recruiters, and animation professionals. The programme also includes a dedicated family day featuring hands-on activities and interactive experiences aimed at engaging younger audiences and future creatives.

This year marks the first programme under MAF's new three-year partnership with the University of Salford. The collaboration brings exclusive panel sessions, guest lectures, and student-led programming to the festival, reinforcing MAF's commitment to nurturing the next generation of animation talent and deepening the connection between education and industry.

Manchester Animation Festival is presented with the support of Higher Education Partner University of Salford, Festival Partner HOME and Festival Patrons Adult Swim, BBC Children's & Education, BBC Studios Kids & Family, Blue Zoo Animation Studio, Epic Games, Industrial Light & Magic and Moho Animation Software.

Tickets go on sale 22 September at 19:30. For full programme details and updates, visit www.manchesteranimationfestival.co.uk

- Ends -

Notes to editors:

Manchester Animation Festival Director is Dr Steve Henderson, Producer and Programmer is Jen Hall, and Bill Lawrence is the Finance Director.

Manchester Animation Festival Board: Tom Box (Chair), Sherelle Fairweather, Jackie Edwards, Jo Clayton, Helen Bowdur, Elroy Simmons, Kate O'Connor.

Tickets and passes will be on sale from 22 September.

Details of all events are available on the MAF website from 22 September.

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Links:

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<https://www.manchesteranimationfestival.co.uk/submissions/>

<https://filmfreeway.com/ManchesterAnimationFestival>

Social media:

Instagram: [@mcranimation](#)

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#MAF2025

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